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# VIRGINIA CREEPER

Multiple-Use Trail

MOUNT ROGERS

## National Recreation Area



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## THE VIRGINIA CREEPER TRAIL

The Virginia Creeper is a multiple-use trail connecting Abingdon, VA, with the Virginia-North Carolina line 1.1 miles east of Whitetop Station, VA. Total length: 33.4 miles.

The Virginia Creeper Trail began as a Native American footpath. Later, it was used by European pioneers including Daniel Boone. By 1907 W.B. Minge had constructed the Virginia-Carolina Railroad from Abingdon to Damascus. In 1905 the line was extended by the Hassinger Lumber Co. to Konnarock and Elkland, NC. In its day, the line hauled lumber, iron ore, supplies and passengers. It got its nickname, Virginia Creeper, from the early steam locomotives as they struggled slowly up steep grades.

With 100 trestles and bridges, sharp curves, and steep grades, the Virginia Creeper was the quintessential mountain railroad. Train crews faced wash-outs, rock slides, and other hazards, but it was economics that sounded the line's death whistle. Having failed to turn a profit since the Great Depression, the Creeper ran its last train on March 31, 1977.

Less than a century after the railroads arrived, the Virginia Creeper became once again a quiet trail. The circle was complete.

Between Abingdon and Damascus, the trail right-of-way belongs to the two towns. Please note that although the public legally has the right to use the trail, most of the actual land between Abingdon and the iron bridge east of Damascus is privately owned. There has been some conflict in the past, but landowner/trail user relations are now good and improving. You can do your part by staying on the trail, closing gates, respecting property owners and livestock, and being courteous to landowners and other trail users.

The 15.9 miles of trail between the iron bridge (Mile 17.5) to the State line are part of the Mt. Rogers National Recreation Area in the Jefferson National Forest. Except for a short stretch through Taylor's Valley, the public owns both the right-of-way and the actual property.

This part of the trail runs through some of the most rugged and picturesque country in the East and has been widely lauded as one of the most beautiful trails on the continent. Enjoy!

## **RULES OF THE TRAIL**

1. The trail is for non-motorized traffic only. If you see motorcycles or ATV's on the trail, write down a description and license numbers and contact Forest Service personnel as soon as possible.
2. Bicyclists and hikers should yield to equestrians. Horseback riders should pull over and allow bicyclists to overtake them.
3. Equestrians should dismount and walk horses across bridges and trestles. Bicycles may be ridden across trestles, but extreme caution is recommended.
4. Pack out all litter, even cigarette butts!
5. Camping is allowed, but campsites must be well off the trail. Camp on private property only with permission.
6. Hunting or carrying firearms on the non-Forest Service portion of the trail is prohibited. Firearms and bows may be carried on the Forest Service portion of the trail ONLY during hunting seasons, but shooting across or from the trail is prohibited. All State hunting regulations must be obeyed. Target shooting is prohibited on National Forests at all times.
7. Bicycle and equestrian helmets are not required, but are HIGHLY recommended.
8. Please use a nonintrusive bell to get the attention of other trail users before passing them.
9. Do not block any gates or park on the trail at any time.
10. Possession or use of fireworks is prohibited.
11. Dogs disrupt the pleasure of other trail users, can spook horses, and scare away wildlife. If you must bring Rover along, a leash is strongly suggested.
12. **Bicyclists and equestrians:** Please keep your bicycle or horse under control and do not travel at excessive speeds.

For more information, please contact:

**Mount Rogers  
National Recreation Area  
Route 1, Box 303  
Marion, VA 24354  
(703)783-5196**

Persons of any race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, or with any handicapping condition are welcome to use and enjoy all facilities, programs and services of the USDA. Discrimination in any form is strictly against agency policy, and should be reported to the Secretary of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250.



TRAIL

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(The first figure shown below for each feature is the distance from the Abingdon trailhead; the figures in parentheses show the distances counting backward from the State line.)

**Mile 0.0 (33.4) Abingdon Trailhead:** Limited parking. The locomotive on display was the last steam engine on the Creeper.

**Mile 2.9 (30.5) Highway 677:** Limited parking.

**Mile 3.7 (29.7) Dry Branch Trestle.**

**Mile 7.2 (26.2) South Holston Trestle:** Very scenic trestle over the conjunction of the south and middle forks of the Holston River at the head of South Holston Lake. This is the lowest point on the trail-1900 feet.

**Mile 8.5 (24.9) Alvarado:** Limited parking.

**Mile 15.5 (17.9) Damascus:** The red caboose is a seasonal USDA Forest Service information station. Parking. Restrooms are in town park.

**Mile 17.5 (15.9) Iron Bridge:** Enter Mount Rogers National Recreation Area.

**Mile 19.5 (13.9) Straight Branch parking lot.**

**Mile 21.0 (12.4) Taylor's Valley:** Parking. Snacks.

**Mile 24.0 (9.4) Konnarock Junction:** Parking. Excellent access to special regulation fishing streams (single hook artificial lures only).

**Mile 25.0 (8.4) High Trestle:** (550 feet long and about 100 feet tall.)

**Mile 29.3 (4.1) Green Cove Station:** Seasonal USDA Forest Service information station. Portable toilets. Parking.

**Mile 32.3 (1.1) Whitetop Station:** Highest point on trail. Parking.

**Mile 33.4 (0.0):** Virginia-North Carolina border. Beyond here, both the right-of-way and the old railroad grade itself is private property. It is not a trail.